SAIC In Full Production for Mk48 Torpedo Propulsion Sections for U.S. Navy

Torpedoman 1st Class Gary Anderson, assigned to Naval Submarine Torpedo Facility (NSTF) in Yorktown, Va., explains the components of a Mark 48 torpedo to Vice Adm. Daryl Caudle, commander of U.S. Submarine Forces, July 24, 2020. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alfred Coffield

ARLINGTON, Va. – Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) is now in full production mode for the propulsion sections of the U.S. Navy's Mk48 submarine-launched torpedo, a company official said. The company also plans to bid on components for an upcoming Foreign Military Sales contract for the torpedo.

In a Nov. 4 interview with Seapower, Steve Rigdon, vice president for Programs at SAIC, said the company currently is building and delivering 260 after-body tail cones for the torpedoes, which contain the propulsion system and the propeller. In August 2020 the Navy exercised the fourth and final option of the contract for $84.8 million for the torpedo's production, which includes torpedoes for Australia and Taiwan. Deliveries under this option are scheduled to begin in October 2022 and be completed by October 2023.

The Navy has restarted procurement of the Mk48 torpedo to shore up its inventory for its submarine force. Earlier production of the torpedo – originally built by Gould – had ceased in the mid-1990s. SAIC received a contract to build the after-body tail cones. Lockheed Martin builds the guidance-and control section. The Navy is providing the fuel tanks and warheads for this production run of weapons.

Rigdon said the Naval Sea Systems Command has issued a Request

for Proposals for a new seven-year contract for procurement for both after-body tail cones and fuel tanks for the Mk48.

“We also recently won a fuel tank contract from NUWC [Naval Undersea Warfare Center] Keyport, [Washington], and that is for FMS purposes,” he said. “We’re currently building fuel tanks as well.”

Navies other than the U.S. Navy that have procured the Mk48 include those of Australia, Canada, Brazil, Taiwan, and Turkey.

Rigdon said that has been one of the biggest challenges has been reinvigorating the supply chain.

“We were working off of a [technical] data package that was pretty old and there were some technical challenges as well as getting the supply chain back up and delivering the assemblies and components that we need,” he said. “It’s been an engineering challenge; it’s a challenge we’ve been up to.”

He also said his facility has maintained full-rate production despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the program management and engineering staff have been working remotely.

SAIC has received accelerated funding under the CARES Act for the torpedo program, receiving 90 percent of incurred cost rather than the pre-pandemic arrangement of 80 percent.

SAIC is building the torpedo assemblies with about 25 production workers at its facility in Bedford, Indiana, located adjacent to the Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane Division, The final assembly and testing of the torpedoes is conducted by the NUWC Keyport.

“Every single one [after-body tail cones] will go through multiple in-water runs before it’s deemed a war-shot [torpedo],” Rigdon said, noting that the Navy’s Intermediate Maintenance Activity in Keyport completely disassembles,

cleans, and re-assembles the tail cones after every in-water run.

“A lot of the success in this program is because of the partnership between the Navy and SAIC,” He said. “Our singular focus is delivering these after-bodies to the best submarines in the world so that they have the best weapons in the world.”